

Mr. Joseph Victim  
123 State Street  
Anytown, USA

January 1, 2003

Re: Victim Restitution

Dear Mr. Victim:

I am sorry to hear that you were the unfortunate victim of a crime on October 11, 2002 involving damage to your vehicle. I am the coordinator of **VORP**, one of the successful programs of our Probate and Family Court. **VORP** stands for the **Victim Offender Reconciliation Program**. This is a community corrections program, which attempts to facilitate personal apologies and restitution agreements between victims and juvenile offenders. (A more detailed description of the program is enclosed).

The juvenile offender(s) in your case have been court ordered to participate in **VORP**. It is my responsibility to assist young offenders in satisfying their **VORP** probation requirement. Many young people have commented that the **VORP** meeting is hardest thing they have to do as a result of their crime. As I am sure you can imagine, meeting with the people they have caused harm to, listening to the effects of their actions in real people's lives, owning up to and apologizing for their actions, and working to fix the damage they have caused is difficult for anyone to do, but especially for teens. It is for this reason that, nationwide, juvenile participation in **VORP** has proven to decrease recurrence of crime.

**I would like to know if you would be willing to attend a mediation meeting with the juvenile offender** and parent(s), in my presence. At these meetings, the juveniles are required to describe the events of the crime, explain the consequences the have as a result of their actions, render sincere apologies, listen to the victims statements, answer victims questions, and determine restitution arrangements. Although the meeting is not necessary to collect restitution, we strongly encourage the meeting because of the benefits to both parties. Regardless of whether or not you wish to participate in a meeting, **I do need to speak with you in order to determine and/or confirm the dollar amount of your losses**, and insurance claim details, if any, because insurance companies are also entitled to restitution in the event of a crime and it is the Court's intention that insurance companies also be reimbursed.

I can often be reached at 231-**547-7214** on Mondays and Wednesdays or 231-**348-1776** on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please leave a message if I am unavailable.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Cochran  
VORPDIRECTOR

## **VICTIM OFFENDER RECONCILIATION PROGRAM**

### **VORP**

As its name implies, VORP is an attempt at making whole, a relationship that has been violated by a crime. It has been described as restorative justice versus punitive justice. VORP brings offenders face-to-face with the victims of their crimes, with the assistance of a trained mediator. By facing their victims and learning first-hand the effects of their crime, offenders come to realize that they have hurt a real person. Their offense is not simply a property crime or an act against a nameless faceless person. The victim is an individual who has suffered in any number of ways: physically, emotionally, mentally, and financially. Crime is personalized, as offenders learn the human consequences of their actions.

VORP offers victims the opportunity to speak directly to the individual who has hurt them, where they are able to ask the often haunting questions that only the offender can answer, such as: "Why did you do this to me? Was this my fault? Could I have prevented this? Were you stalking or watching me?" With their questions answered, victims commonly report a new feeling of peace of mind. While VORP is voluntary for the victim, it is strongly encouraged. Victims who are initially fearful of the process, often report that the sessions gave them closure and satisfaction. It is not uncommon to see meaningful and sometimes miraculous reconciliation between the parties; part of the freedom inherent in acts of forgiveness.

VORP is usually ordered by the Court as one of the probationary terms for the offender. A VORP representative then contacts the offender to explain the process. Offenders are encouraged to take meaningful responsibility for their actions by first apologizing, and then by mediating a restitution agreement with the victim, to restore the victims' losses, in whatever ways that may be possible. Restitution may be monetary or symbolic; it may consist of work for the victim, community service or anything else that creates a sense of justice between the victim and the offender. Studies show that offenders who participate in this mediation program are less likely to offend in the future, thereby benefiting the entire community.

If you have further questions, concerns, or problems, please call the VORP Director at 231-547-7214 or 231-348-1776.